

Health and Human Services budget bill passes at close of 2015 Legislative Session

(The Link, August 2015)

Just prior to the end of the 2015 Legislative Session on June 5, the House and Senate agreed on a version of [Senate File 505](#), the Health and Human Services budget bill that provides funding to executive branch human services agencies, including the Iowa Department on Aging and the Office of the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman.

Governor Branstad signed the bill into law on July 2, authorizing funding for aging and long-term care advocacy programs in the amount of \$12.7 million. Although he did exercise veto authority in some portions of the bill, the sections directly impacting the Iowa Department on Aging and the Office of the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman remained in place.

Altogether, the Iowa Department on Aging received \$11,419,732 to fund operations and provide funding to Iowa's six Area Agencies on Aging to offer services and supports to older Iowans and their families. The appropriation includes the following:

- \$279,946 for the Economic Development Authority to administer the Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP)
- \$250,000 for unmet needs identified through the Aging and Disability Resource Center network
- \$600,000 for home and community-based services
- \$525,000 to be distributed through the Area Agencies on Aging to administer the Prevention of Elder Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation Program
- \$288,666 to administer the Office of Substitute Decision Maker

The legislation also includes several policy provisions. Highlights include:

- An amendment to the Office of Substitute Decision Maker Act extending the mandated timeframe by which local offices of substitute decision makers must be established (date is extended from July 1, 2015, to July 1, 2017).
- A directive that the Aging and Disability Resource Center and the Mental Health and Disability Services Commission develop a plan for a home modification assistance program. The directive further mandates that the Iowa Department on Aging and other stakeholders shall be consulted and provide input during the process.
- A directive that the Iowa Department on Aging shall convene an inter-agency task force to review the recommendation for a standard curriculum model for dementia education submitted by the Alzheimer's Association as part of a task force in 2010. Recommendations are due to the Governor and the General Assembly by Dec. 15, 2015.

The Office of the State Long Term Care Ombudsman

The Office of the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman received a total of \$1,276,783, including a \$220,000 appropriation to provide additional local long-term care ombudsmen.

Highlights of the policy provisions include:

- A directive that the Office of the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman and the Iowa Department of Human Services shall collaborate to develop a cost allocation plan to claim Medicaid administrative funds for assistance and advocacy services provided by the OSLTCO that directly benefit the state's Medicaid program.
- A directive that the Office of the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman shall collaborate with the Iowa Department on Aging, the Office of Substitute Decision Maker, the Iowa Department of Veterans Affairs, the Iowa Department of Human Services, the Iowa Department of Public Health, the Iowa Department of Inspections and Appeals, Disability Rights Iowa, the Civil Rights Commission, the Senior Health Insurance Information Program, the Iowa Insurance Consumer Advocate, Iowa Legal Aid and other consumer advocates and consumer assistance programs to develop a proposal for the establishment of a Health Consumer Ombudsman Alliance. The Alliance will provide a permanent, coordinated system of independent consumer supports to ensure that consumers, including those covered under Medicaid managed care, are able to obtain and maintain essential health care services; are provided unbiased information regarding coverage models; and are assisted in resolving problems regarding health care services, coverage, access and rights. The proposal is due to the Governor and the General Assembly by Dec. 15, 2015.